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Comparative-Religion Notes.

THE "BARROWS LECTURES" IN INDIA.

[From a pamphlet written by the Rev. R. A. Hume, D.D., of India, the following extracts, describing the work of Dr. John Henry Barrows of The University of Chicago, will prove of interest to many readers.]

Two influential communities in India looked forward with deep interest and questioning to these Barrows-Haskell lectures, viz., the non-Christian religious reformers and the Christian missionaries. The former have been much influenced by the Lord Jesus Christ; they know that there has been some change among Western Christians in conceiving and stating the Christian faith, and they have thought and hoped that the Parliament of Religions meant and would more and more show that none of the present religions of the world is to become the final religion, but that each, with some modifications, is good enough for its adherents, and that the final, universal religion will be some mixture and outcome of them all. Such persons anticipated, with much hope, yet with some misgiving, the coming of Dr. Barrows.

Because the entire non-Christian community in India had so interpreted the Parliament of Religions, and because most missionaries in India have not had time to see what is to be the real outcome of that unique religious conference, many missionaries here looked forward with misgiving lest the Barrows-Haskell lectures would lead Indians to think that leaders of the West had somewhat lowered the Christian standard. But there were some missionaries who confidently expected a high and strong presentation of their faith.

When he landed in Bombay, accompanied by Mrs. Barrows, on December 15, 1896, he was very heartily welcomed by representatives of the Hindu, Jain, Parsi, Brahmo and Christian communities, partly through delegations and partly by letters. The Bombay Missionary Conference had arranged a large reception for him at Wilson College, where leaders of all communities were to meet him. But on account of the epidemic which is ravaging Bombay it was deemed best that he should hurry away from that city, and the reception was given up. He went first to Benares and spent five days in observations of Hindu-

ism in its capital. But his work began in Calcutta, the political and intellectual capital of India, where he stayed from December 23d to January 4th.

A noble reception, worthy of the hospitality of hospitable India and most honorable to the leader of Hindu Society in Calcutta, was given at the palace of the Maharajah Bahadur Sir Jotindra Mohun Tagore, K.C.S.I., by representatives of the Hindu, Mohammedan, Jain, Parsi, Buddhist, Brahmo and Christian communities. It was a unique and grand occasion, the exact parallel to which has never occurred, when, in an orthodox Hindu prince's palace, representatives of every faith met to give the heartiest welcome to a Christian lecturer from the West.

The six lectures on the Haskell foundation were delivered in the Hall of the General Assembly's Institution in the northern part of Calcutta, and half of them were also given in the London Mission's Institution in the southern quarter of the city. In addition, lectures, sermons, and addresses on such topics as "The Spiritual World of Shakespeare," "The Parliament of Religions," "Human Restlessness and Christ its Quieter," "The Comfort of Christian Theism," were delivered before associations of students and other bodies. Almost every morning there were personal interviews with representatives of various religions. Very cordial receptions were given to Dr. and Mrs. Barrows by the widow of Keshub Chandra Sen and her daughter the Maharani of Kuch Behar on the anniversary of Mr. Sen's last public service, by Mr. Mozoomdar, the present leader of the new dispensation, and by others.

After this Dr. Barrows visited Lucknow, where two lectures were delivered; Cawnpore, Delhi, where he spoke four times; Lahore, where five addresses were given; Amritsar; Agra, where he delivered five addresses; Jeypore, Ajmere, Indore, Ahmednagar; Poona, where he gave ten lectures and addresses; Bangalore, Vellore, and Madras. Up to the present time (February 18) Dr. Barrows has delivered eighty-five addresses in India and has thus reached many thousands of the educated people of the country.

The standpoint of the lectures is clearly indicated by their general title: "Christianity, the World-Religion." This thesis has been developed and maintained in a large and kindly way, by a masterly massing of facts, by forcible argument, and by a most sympathetic spirit toward all that is good in every faith. Some of those who were not present at the Parliament of Religions have been surprised at the strong, unhesitating utterances of Dr. Barrows in regard to the Christian faith

as sure to become the universal religion. But the series has been everywhere received with marked interest and attention. The following are examples of what has been said in various organs of different religious communities :

Unity and the Minister, the organ of the Church of the New Dispensation, said :

Dr. Barrows' presence here was imposing and enchanting, and gave an impetus to the mind of the thoughtful portion of his Christian and non-Christian hearers. . . . We knew he was a Christian of the orthodox school, and his recent lectures have not disappointed us, but increased our admiration for him. Our admiration for Dr. Barrows was the greater, because, being a Christian of what may be called the orthodox school, his heart was so liberal, so world-embracing, so many-sided.

The *Indian Christian Herald*, the organ of the Bengali Christians, said :

The gospel lectures found among their hearers men of light and leading, Hindu, Brahmo, and Parsee, who had never before listened to a distinctive, evangelical appeal. Nay, some of them were delivered under the acquiescing presidency of Brahmo and Hindu representatives, while all elicited, from non-Christians and Christians alike, repeated plaudits of approval. We are firmly persuaded that Dr. Barrows has been used of God to draw out, and make patent, some of the invisible trophies of missions, and that the outlook is bound to be an enthusiastic revival of the missionary spirit in the Homes of Missions. He had taken his stand on the same exangelical foundations which are exhibited in the apostolic commission of the missionaries. Dr. Barrows has illustrated, further, that, while the recognition of truth, wherever it was found, was an imperative obligation on the part of every true man, such recognition, properly viewed, was a source of strength rather than of weakness to Christianity.

The *Indian Witness* of Calcutta said :

We very much doubt whether India has ever been favored with so worthy a presentation of the Christian faith. . . . The lectures are a magnificent contribution to the Christian evidences, well worthy of a permanent place in literature. Many competent critics have pronounced the lecture on the Universal Book the finest presentation of the incomparable place in the world's life and literature of the Christian Scriptures which they have read or heard.

The *Hindu* of Madras, one of the ablest of the non-Christian journals of India, said :

Dr. Barrows is certainly to be congratulated on the impression he has produced as a lecturer. There is an unanimous feeling that he possesses

great powers of exposition, and a thorough knowledge of his subject. More than all, he has evidently a great love for the people of this country and some appreciation for their good qualities, and especially for their intellectual keenness and aptitude for metaphysical controversy.

But no reference to the lectures has been more honorable to India than the noble sentiment of the *Indian Social Reformer*, the courageous organ of the reformers in Madras. Differing from Dr. Barrows in standpoint and in belief, this paper spoke the following true words about the lecturer's utterances :

It has, we see, been made a point against Dr. Barrows that he claims a position for Christianity superior to that of any other religion. We are, of course, not prepared to concede that claim. But we never expected that Dr. Barrows would condescend to waive that claim for his own faith, and if he had done so, we, for one, should not have very much cared to listen to what he has to say.

And we regard as the outcome of sheer intellectual indolence and pusillanimity, the opinion which is fashionable nowadays that one conviction, one faith, is as good as another. We regard this easygoing fashion of mind as fraught with the greatest danger to the future of this country. For it means isolation ; it spells death. The vice, wherever and in whatever form it prevails, is the child of pure selfishness.

The religion of the future will no doubt have affinities with each of the existing religions, just as the human race has affinities with the anthropoid apes. We, therefore, welcome Dr. Barrows' statement of the claims of his faith. If they are exaggerated or imaginary, they will go to the wall of their own accord. If they are real, on the other hand, it may so happen that some courageous souls that have been seeking the light and not found it, may be impressed with them and may be led to transform themselves into the receptacles of a greatness such as an exalted religious idea alone can bestow. We invite our friends to give their unbiased hearing to Dr. Barrows. To be afraid of being converted to his views is cowardice. No man who is afraid of having to relinquish his prepossessions need call himself a religious man or a lover of truth. His proper place is in the vegetable kingdom, where to be uprooted is to perish. The human vegetable is the most despicable of human things.

The following statement corroborates the words of Dr. Hume as to the effect of Dr. Barrows' lectures :

At a meeting of the Calcutta Missionary Conference, held the eighth day of February, 1897, it was resolved to record the following deliverance in regard to the first series of the "Barrows Lectures," and to send a copy of the same to Dr Barrows and to Mrs. Caroline E. Haskell :

The Conference desire to put on record their sense of the very great service Dr. Barrows has rendered to the cause of Christianity in India by the six lectures on Mrs. Haskell's foundation which he delivered in Calcutta on the Universality of the Christian Religion. They were distinguished by their high-toned earnestness, their incisive force, their brave and unambiguous outspokenness, their thorough grasp of the great truths they handled, their practical value as a contribution to Christian apologetics, their profound learning and sweet persuasiveness. In them, the inaugurating series of the lectureship, were fulfilled the promises made at its inception. They were distinguished by the scholarly and withal friendly, temperate, and conciliatory manner in which opponents of Christianity were referred to, and by the fraternal spirit which animated all allusions to the devotees of other religions. While the rightful claims of Christianity were set forth without compromise or hesitation, they were at the same time set forth in such a way as to secure the favorable interest of the many who would not acknowledge these claims. The Conference were also struck by the untiring activity which Dr. Barrows manifested during his short stay of fourteen days in Calcutta. For during that period he addressed as many as twenty-two audiences in the same earnest forceful manner, never sparing himself, or in any way compromising his position as a Christian lecturer desirous of winning souls for the Lord Jesus. Dr. and Mrs. Barrows carry with them wherever they go the best wishes and the prayers of the members of the Calcutta Missionary Conference.

The Conference desire to place also on record their hope that the six "Barrows Lectures" be printed in a cheap form and widely circulated in single lectures and also as a book containing all six; and that those which are to follow on the foundation may be of the same type and equally useful to the missionary cause.

In expressing their high appreciation of Dr. Barrows as a Christian lecturer, the Conference would not forget their obligations to the good Christian lady, Mrs. Caroline E. Haskell, who so liberally founded the Barrows lectures, and to the members of The University of Chicago who secured Dr. John Henry Barrows to inaugurate the lectureship. The Conference send their greetings to Mrs. Haskell, and wish her a long, useful, and happy life in the Lord's service on earth, and that thus be richly supplied unto her the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

[Extract from the Records of the Calcutta Missionary Conference by the Joint Secretaries, K. S. Macdonald, D.D., Free Church of Scotland; G. H. Parsons, Church Missionary Society.]